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ABSTRACT

Written for young people, this book traces the accomplishments of Cesar Chavez, a labor leader who fought to improve the lives of Mexican-American farmworkers in California. Chavez was born in 1927 in the Gila Valley, Arizona. When Chavez was 10, his family lost their farm and was forced to move to California and become migrant workers. Chavez and his family found the life of migrant work to be very difficult. Children could not attend school because they moved so often. Pay was low and families lived in shacks with no running water. During the 1950s, Chavez began urging workers to start a union. He believed a union could make farm owners pay higher wages and provide better housing and that these changes could come about without violence. In 1959, Chavez formed the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA). In 1965, with Chavez' leadership, the NFWA was successful in negotiating a contract between grape pickers and a large company. This contract was the first of its kind in the history of American farm labor. In February 1968, Cesar Chavez began to fast in order to attract national attention to the plight of migrant farmworkers. This would be the first of three times that he stopped eating to protest the working conditions and low pay of farmworkers. In 1974, California passed the Agricultural Labor Relations Act, a bill of rights for farmworkers that gave them the right to organize. During the 1980s, the union and Chavez focused their efforts on the dangers to farmworkers from toxic agricultural pesticides. Includes an index and a list of important events in Chavez's life. (LP)

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